

# The President's Challenge

## Fitness Tips for Seniors

Seniors today are more active than ever and more aware of the need to exercise on a regular basis. This is good news, but it's also important for seniors to keep in mind that they should approach fitness in a different way than they did when they were younger. Rather than risking injury, seniors should embrace safer and more productive ways to get the most out of exercise. The following are some helpful tips gathered by experts from the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and an advisory board of the International Council on Active Aging.

### 1. Get a Checkup

Before you start any program, you'll want to be examined by your physician who will determine whether you are ready to begin a specific program or if you'll need to make any lifestyle modifications before you start exercising.

### 2. Find An Activity You Enjoy

To help you stick with any fitness program, try to find a physical activity that you really enjoy so that you'll want to do it everyday. Also try to determine whether you would prefer to go solo or take a class. Some people prefer going to the gym for a structured workout, while others may want to combine social and physical activity by participating in a neighborhood walking club.

### 3. Take It Slow

In your eagerness to get started (or restarted!) with exercise, don't rush into it. This may leave you sore and ready to quit. It's better to start slowly and discover how much exercise is right for you. Record all your activities during each waking hour or for two-or-three hour time blocks, tracking how much time you are sedentary (e.g. sitting at your desk) or active (e.g. walking around). At the day's end, count how many minutes you have and have not been physically active. Then look at when you could fit some short (e.g. 10 minutes) bouts of brisk walking into your day.

### 4. Set Goals

Sometimes it's easier to incorporate new things into your day when you target specific goals for yourself. For example, you might set the goal of walking for 10 minutes, three days a week, before lunch time or after dinner. Being specific helps you plan for activity in your day and also helps make it a priority. One excellent way to set goals is to work towards achieving the President's Active Lifestyle Award (PALA), which is now available to adults through the President's Challenge program via [www.PresidentsChallenge.org](http://www.PresidentsChallenge.org).

### 5. Be Realistic

It's important to think about the benefits you'll derive from physical activity, but make sure that you're realistic about your expectations. If you set the goal to lose 30 pounds in a month, you're likely to be disappointed. Try to make benefits something that you can control rather than a major outcome such as substantial weight loss. Increase your list of benefits as your activity level increases.

### 6. Every Step Counts

Consider wearing a step counter throughout the day to keep track of how many

steps you take. Less active people tend to take about 4,000 or fewer steps per day. Whatever your daily steps total is now, aim to do 250 to 1,000 additional steps of brisk walking, until you reach 10,000 steps in a day. A step counter is available through the President's Challenge program at [www.PresidentsChallenge.org](http://www.PresidentsChallenge.org).

### **7. Wear the Right Shoes**

Foot comfort and support is crucial for all impact physical activities. If you have arthritis, diabetes or orthopedic problems, you can remain physically active with the help of appropriate shoes. Ask your physician for information on what footwear is right for you.

### **8. If It Hurts, Don't Do It**

The expression "no pain, no gain" does not apply here. At this stage of life, you need to work around the pain, not through it.

### **9. Follow A Well-Rounded Program**

Include all five components of a successful program: warm-up, flexibility, cardio, resistance and cool-down.

### **10. Reward Yourself**

Once you've reached a goal, be sure to treat yourself to something that rewards you for your effort. Make it something that feeds your spirit, but it shouldn't necessarily be food.